



5 Cause Marketing Guidelines that Generate Maximum Value.

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Q: I recognize the value of Cause Marketing, but how do I generate maximum value from our efforts?

A: Every successful Cause Marketing Program shares these 5 attributes.

MSL Group / QORVIS reports that 69% of Millennials want companies to make it easier for them to support causes. And companies are listening. A recent Cone Cause Evolution study found that 41% of Americans had purchased a product in the past year specifically because it was affiliated with a social or environmental cause.

Increasingly companies are making it easy and fun for customers to support causes, including interactive experiences at trade shows. (More on that a little later in this article.)

Cause marketing has come to be characterized as, **“Doing Well by Doing Good.”** It’s not just one-sided corporate philanthropy; it’s engaging corporate customers more deeply in the brand as a vehicle for supporting the causes they care about.

When the model is well executed there are gains for everyone.

- The non-profit benefits from an increase in public awareness and funding.
- The company is better able to differentiate its brand, strengthen its reputation as a socially responsible organization, attract new, socially-minded customers, and build on existing brand loyalty.
- Employees, if sufficiently engaged in the effort, experience a greater sense of team and purpose.

Cause Marketing engages corporate customers more deeply in the brand.

- Current customers enjoy the convenience and satisfaction of supporting a cause, as well as a company that synchs with their values.

If you are considering having your company adopt a specific cause, here are five guidelines to steer you in the right direction:

1. Make the Right Connection: Every social and environmental cause deserves support, but choose one that makes strategic sense for your company. Select a cause that is in harmony with your brand, products, or customer profile. The clearer you can connect the cause with your company values or mission, the easier you can communicate that key relationship to your audience.

The more appropriate your cause, the more genuine your company's efforts will appear ... as opposed to "bandwagon jumping" by supporting something merely because it is trendy.

For example: **NextGen Healthcare** went straight to the source and polled their attendees about which organizations THEY would like to support. NextGen then initiated a program that would generate donations to a variety of health-oriented charities, with each donation triggered by listening to a brief presentation in their tradeshow exhibit. Each cause was consistent with NextGen's focus, and the audience understood (and appreciated) the alignment.

However, if a company's choice of cause is less than intuitive, it leaves the target audience scratching their heads and speculating about the company's sincerity.

2. Make a Philosophical Match: Can a "not so obvious" connection to a cause work well, too? Absolutely—provided the relationship ties in with your company's core values. **Subaru**, for example, supports a wide range of causes including education, health, and pets — all of which fit under its broad "Love Promise" to make the world a better place. In 2014, they donated \$250 for every new vehicle sold or leased to the customer's choice of the many diverse charities Subaru supports. The carmaker, and similarly savvy marketers, seem poised to benefit from Cone Communications' recent findings **that "89% of Americans are likely to switch brands due to cause affiliations."**

3. Formalize the Relationship: Approach the charity you want to support. Explain your alignment interests and discuss ways to link your campaign efforts. Be sure to respect their interest in protecting their brand. Set up an approval process for the charitable organization to pre-approve each press release and piece of collateral you create to communicate the relationship. Invite a representative to speak at your company, perhaps at a kickoff event for the cause campaign. Create links on your company website to promote your partner's fundraising events and milestones.

4. Get Your People Behind It. Whether your cause marketing is intended for a single meeting, a short series of tradeshows, or for an enduring campaign, enlist support throughout your company. Find ways to engage employees in supporting it. Offer a webinar to educate them about the cause and campaign. Create email blasts and signage to strengthen awareness. Encourage fundraising activities outside of the workplace.

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Authenticity counts and is easier to project when the cause penetrates the hearts of your people. The hardware giant Home Depot donates to Habitat for Humanity. But the company's philanthropic integrity is powerfully reinforced by its employees, who annually volunteer to build homes for Habitat. There's no question about the commitment to their cause.

5. Make Your Cause Interactive. The challenge facing marketers today is not getting customers to believe in a cause, but getting them to participate in it. A global medical company planned a mixed media campaign around multiple touch points with the goal of enlisting customers in its corporate citizenship effort.

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The vision included a click-through PURL campaign that gave customers the opportunity to discover two organizations the company intended to support in a mission to provide medical supplies to the developing world. To leverage its presence at industry events and trade shows—and build advocacy for the two non-profits—the company also planned a complimentary booth activity to immerse customers in the campaign. The objective was to encourage visitors to trigger a \$50,000 donation by voting for one of the two causes. After making a choice, a profile of a typical recipient and his or her medical condition—followed by an animation of the ship or plane transporting medical supplies toward the goal—was shown on a large format monitor. When the interaction was done, the participant was thanked with a final message ... “Thank you for making a difference.”

Conclusion. Giving back humanizes your brand and demonstrates your social responsibility. It is also, essentially, the right thing to do, but the success of your cause marketing efforts hinge on choosing the right non-profit, building a meaningful relationship with them, and enlisting the support of your employees. With these three core components in place, you will have the opportunity to create interactive experiences that authentically engage your customers with your cause — and your company.